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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 2728
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 0987
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO IMMEDIATE 2380
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RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO IMMEDIATE 9075
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 023798

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TAGS: [BR](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [SOCI](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING BRAZIL ON REGIONAL COUNTER-NARCOTICS
COOPERATION

Classified By: WHA/DAS CHRISTOPHER J. MCMULLEN, 1.4 (B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: WHA and INL recently held an initial conversation to encourage the Government of Brazil to assume a greater role in regional counter-narcotics efforts. INL A/S Johnson solicited Brazilian views on how to increase cooperation in responding to regional drug trends. WHA DAS McMullen noted that the U.S. would like to work more closely with Brazil on a regional strategy to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in South America. He added that the U.S. would welcome Brazil's leadership in this effort. Brazilian Foreign Ministry (MFA) Director Virginia Toniatti said she would follow up with the appropriate MFA officials regarding our interest in closer cooperation. Meanwhile, there have been signs that some senior Brazilian officials are concerned about cocaine flows from Bolivia, particularly in light of the Bolivian government's recent expulsion of the Drug Enforcement Administration. We believe this offers an opportunity for us to encourage Brazil to take the lead in working with us and other South American countries to combat the drug problem. End Summary.

Grappling with the Bolivia Problem

12. (C) On March 3, INL's Assistant Secretary David T. Johnson and WHA's Deputy Assistant Secretary Christopher J. McMullen co-led the U.S. side in a two-hour meeting with a four-person delegation from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Director of MFA's Office of Transnational and Illicit Crimes, Virginia Toniatti, led the Brazilian delegation. The DEA provided a briefing on its efforts to reduce the global drug trade, highlighting its focus on disrupting and arresting the leaders of key narco-trafficking organizations. DEA underscored that the expulsion of its personnel from Bolivia had seriously disrupted efforts to counter the drug trade in South America.

13. (C) A/S Johnson observed that the U.S. historically had a

strong and successful counter-narcotics partnership with Bolivia. As a result of DEA,s explusion from Bolivia, however, seizures of illicit drugs inside Bolivia have decreased while seizures of drugs coming out of Bolivia have increased in countries such as Peru and Argentina. DEA also discussed the proliferation of Mexican and Colombian cartels in Bolivia and other countries in the region. Director Toniatti said Brazil recognized the threat posed by coca-based drugs transiting the region, including Brazil, but claimed that her government was more concerned about increased trafficking in precursor chemicals and synthetic drugs. (Comment: Despite Toniatti,s claim, reporting from multiple sources suggests the GOB is seriously concerned about coca-based drugs coming from Bolivia, a factor that likely led the Brazilian Embassy to accept our proposal to begin a dialogue on closer cooperation.)

Gang Violence and Citizens' Security

14. (C) The FBI provided an overview of gangs and their key role in the drug trade, ranging from production to distribution. Director Toniatti observed that Brazil suffered from urban violence in cities such as Rio and Sao Paulo. However, she claimed this was not the same as gang violence in Central America and the United States. She

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maintained that Brazil's problem with violence in the favelas (shanty-towns) was not a gang-related problem; rather, it stemmed largely from social exclusion, lack of healthcare, and lower education levels. (Comment: Toniatti,s attempt to de-link drugs, gangs and violence in Brazil,s favelas would not be credible to the majority of Brazilians, particularly those who live in the favelas and suffer from these interrelated problems on a daily basis.)

Next Steps

15. (C) INL A/S Johnson stated that both Brazil and the United States share a common challenge with drug-trafficking in the region. With DEA no longer able to operate in Bolivia, the United States must deal with the problem by working more closely with other countries in the region. He applauded the fact that a number of countries in South America, including Brazil, had accepted DEA agents who had been expelled from Bolivia. This relocation of DEA agents will facilitate efforts to develop a regional strategy to curb the flow of drugs coming from Bolivia. Johnson asked the Brazilians to consider developing a coordinated approach in dealing more broadly with drug trafficking in the region. WHA DAS McMullen underscored the seriousness of the Bolivia problem, particularly in light of that country,s weak institutions and its lack of capacity to combat Colombian and Mexican cartels.

16. (C) In response to Toniatti,s query about the state of U.S.-Bolivian relations, both A/S Johnson and DAS McMullen noted that we would continue to attempt to engage with Bolivia. With that said, strains in U.S.-Bolivian relations will likely continue to complicate our ability to cooperate effectively with Bolivia on counter-narcotics. In concluding, Director Toniatti said she would report our concerns and proposals to MFA officials; she promised to follow up on the ideas raised at the meeting. (Note: A/S Johnson sent a follow-up letter to Director Toniatti reiterating the USG,s position and encouraging Brazil to enhance its counter-narcotics cooperation.)

Comment

17. (C) This initial conversation with MFA officials on closer cooperation was a good first step in trying to convince GOB authorities that it is in Brazil,s best interests to work more closely with us and other countries in the region to combat the drug problem. The GOB has traditionally viewed this issue as an "Andean problem," and thus resisted our efforts to engage Brazil on collective efforts to combat drug-trafficking. Since the expulsion of DEA from Bolivia, there have been signs that some senior Brazilian officials are concerned about cocaine flows from Bolivia. We believe this offers us an opportunity to encourage Brazil to take the lead in working with us and its neighbors in developing a more comprehensive approach to the drug problem.

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